as described later, according to the result of detection.

The degrees of attention which the conference participant HM1 pays to the other conference participants include how much (more specifically, analog values or stepped values indicating the state in which) the conference participant HM1 pays attention to each of the monitor devices MD2 to MDn as well as whether (more specifically, digital "0" or "1" indicating whether) the conference participant HM1 pays attention in a direction toward each of the monitor devices MD2 to MDn or in another direction.

The attention-degree-information generating section JB1 analyzes the image data of the conference participant HM1, sent from the camera of the monitor device MDm to detect the direction in which the conference participant HM1 faces, every unit periods. Details thereof will be described later.

More specifically, the attention-degree-information generating section JB1 detects a period Ij as shown in Fig. 3(a) as information indicating the direction in which the conference participant HM1 faces and a period for which the conference participant HM1 continues to face in the direction. In this case, Ij is one of values 2 to n, which correspond to the other conference participants HM2 to HMn, or 0, which indicates none of the conference participants HM2 to HMn. The attention-degree-information generating section JB1 detects a period I2 in which the conference

participant HM1 faces the monitor device MD2 on which an image of the conference participant HM2 is displayed, a period I3 in which the conference participant HM1 faces the monitor device MD3 on which an image of the conference participant HM3 is displayed, a period Im in which the conference participant HM1 faces the monitor device MDm on which an image of the conference participant HMm is displayed, a period In-1 in which the conference participant HM1 faces the monitor device MDn-1 on which an image of the conference participant HMn-1 is displayed, a period In in which the conference participant HM1 faces the monitor device MDn on which an image of the conference participant HMn is displayed, or a period I0 in which the conference participant HM1 faces none of the monitor devices MD2 to MDn.

Then, the attention-degree-information generating section JB1 detects a period longer than a time Tcont among detected periods, some of I2 to In and I0. When the attention-degree-information generating section JB1 detects a period longer than the time Tcont, it generates information (Hi:Aj) indicating that the conference participant HM1 pays attention to the conference participant corresponding to the detected period, such as those shown in Fig. 3(b).

In the information (Hi:Aj), "i" corresponds to a conference participant HMi (for example, "1" for HM1), and

"j" corresponds to one of the other conference participants HMj (i ≠ j) (2 to n corresponding to the other conference participants HM2 to HMn when "i" is 1) or 0, which corresponds to none of the conference participants.

More specifically, a description is made in the case shown in Fig. 3. When the attention-degree-information generating section JB1 detects periods I3, I0, and I2 as periods longer than the time Tcont among detected periods, some of I2 to In and I0, shown in Fig. 3(a), the attention-degree-information generating section JB1 generates, as attention-degree information, information (H1:A3) indicating that the conference participant HM1 pays attention to the conference participant HM3 corresponding to the detected period I3; information (H1:A0) indicating that the conference participant HM1 pays attention to none of the monitor devices MD or pay attention to something other than the monitor devices MD, corresponding to the detected period I0; and information (H1:A2) indicating that the conference participant HM1 pays attention to the conference participant HM2 corresponding to the detected period I2, as shown in Fig. 3(b).

The attention-degree-information generating section JB1 may generate attention-degree information according to the detection of a period Ij and switch-pressing information sent from the switch SW. More specifically, when the